

# BELOW THE DEAD LINE

BY SCOTT CAMPBELL.

## The Case of the Under Secretary

Continued from Page 4.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kendall of London."  
"Do you know where they may be found?"

"Presumably at one of the hotels—probably the Waldorf."  
"Ring up the Waldorf at once, then, and ask if they are registered there," cried Boyd.

"Yes, Mr. Boyd, they are," Dearborn excitedly reported, a little later. "Do you wish to talk with them?"

"Yes, and to see them," said Boyd, bluntly. "Give me one of your cards. That's all, sir. Do nothing more on the case—absolutely nothing—till you hear from me. That shall be as early as possible. Now, sir, I'm off for the Waldorf. Don't delay me, gentlemen, for a moment may be of value."

With which, disregarding the questions Dearborn was fain to ask, Mr. Felix Boyd hastened from the consul general's office and into that of the banker, from which he quickly beckoned the central office man there and hung him.

"There's nothing yet doing for you, Jimmie," he hurriedly remarked, as they proceeded to the street. "But I feel sure that I shall need you later."  
"Say when, Felix," laughed Coleman. "That's all that's necessary."  
"Got anything on?"  
"Nothing important."  
"Will it bore you very much to wait in my office until I show up?"  
"Not in the least."

"Go there, then, and wait till I come. It may be soon, or possibly not for several hours."

"I'll be there when you come."  
"Do so. I anticipate a bit of warm work, provided I can follow the thread I've got hold of, and haste may be imperative. So don't disappoint me, Jimmie."

"Not I, Felix!"  
"So long, then, I'll surely see you later."

II.  
In the circumstantial evidence bearing upon the disappearance or abduction of Luella Dearborn, as just presented, one would hardly say that Mr. Felix Boyd could have discovered anything of serious importance. Very few men, indeed, would have regarded with more than superficial consideration the simple circumstances brought to his notice; and it is doubtful if any man on earth, save Boyd alone, would have discovered in them anything of a very encouraging nature.

Boyd seldom moved out of a walk, however, unless stimulated in some extraordinary way; and the celebrity with which he arrived at the Waldorf, after leaving Dearborn's office, was alone significant.

High noon found him just entering the apartments of Mr. and Mrs. Kendall, to whom he presented the consul's card and introduced himself, then hastened to state his business.

"It's about Miss Dearborn," said he, while making a cursory survey of the English couple. "She has—"

"Been abducted? Oh, yes, we have just heard of it, and are in great distress about her," Mrs. Kendall impulsively interrupted, with much agitation.

"Heard of it, eh?" rejoined Boyd, with a curious squint. "May I ask, if you please, who was your informant?"  
"Why, sir, Mr. Dearborn himself," replied the lady. "Joe—that's Mr. Kendall—just had a talk with him by telephone, and was informed of the dreadful news."

"Mr. Dearborn, if you will pardon me, would do better if he kept the affair quiet," said Boyd, a bit dryly. "It is barely possible that I may, by speedily recovering the girl, be able to spare him and her the unpleasant notoriety attending the general publicity of such an affair. I by no means imply, however, that you and Mr. Kendall will not maintain a generous secrecy," he smilingly added, with much suavity.

"Oh, we will disclose nothing, I assure you," cried Kendall, warmly. "Dearborn is our very dear friend. If we can be of any service, moreover, I hope you will command us."

"As I now am investigating the affair," returned Boyd, "you may answer a few questions for me, if you will."

"Cheerfully."

"Was Miss Dearborn with you when the Umbria arrived at the pier?"

"She was, Mr. Boyd, and remained with us until she departed with her father's secretary."

"With his secretary?" queried Boyd, with lifted brows.

"Certainly, sir, so the gentleman stated. He came on board soon after 10 o'clock, and, having found Luella, he stated that her father had a very important case in court this morning, and could not come to the steamer. He introduced himself as Dearborn's under-secretary, and said that he had been sent from the consul's office to escort the girl to her father's residence."

"Did she readily accompany him?"

"Immediately," bowed Kendall. "Naturally none of us had any reason to distrust the man."

"Had she any baggage other than her trunks?"

"She had quite a large portmanteau, made of brown leather. Of this the under-secretary politely relieved her, when they started to leave the steamer."

"Did you see them after they disembarked?"

"We did not. They disappeared under the shed on the pier."

"On what part of the vessel were you located when she was made fast to the pier?"

"We were seated on the after-deck, sir, watching for Mr. Dearborn, who we expected would meet Luella at the steamer."

"How long did you remain there after the vessel was docked?"

"About half an hour, I should say."

"Were you in plain view of the pier?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, very much," smiled Boyd, rising to go. "Now I will trouble you only for a general description of—well, I will call him—the under-secretary."

Kendall laughed, and hastened to add the desired description, whereupon Mr. Felix Boyd made a hurried departure, and let no grass grow under his feet in returning downtown.

Between 12:30 and 3 that afternoon, Boyd located and interviewed no less than seventy-two public nacksmen, delaying to ask of each only such questions as evoked replies indicating that he was not the man Boyd sought.

Not until he struck hackman seventy-three, at the foot of Warren street, did Boyd light upon his man. Once again, however, it is doubtful if another than Boyd would have derived much satisfaction from the perfectly frank statements of the hackman, or have been at all elated at having discovered him.

Hackman seventy-three was an Irishman named Casey, with red hair,

and a short, croppy heard of the same roseate hue. He had ruddy cheeks, a pair of shrewd gray eyes, and in years and build was about on a line with Boyd himself.

At a gesture from the latter Casey readily came down from his box, when the following brief interview ensued, the acumen displayed by Felix Boyd placing him in a class entirely his own:

"Is this a public carriage, my man?" he asked.

"Sure, sor, it is," replied Casey, with an unctuous brogue.

"Have you been out with it since morning?"

"I have, sor, save when baiting up a bit."

"Were you at the Jane street pier when the Umbria was docked this morning?"

"That's where I was, sor."

"Did you secure any passengers?"

"I did."

"How many?"

"Why will I be after telling you?" inquired Casey, with a suspicious squint of his gray eyes.

"I am a detective, Mr. Casey," said Boyd, with quiet significance. "Answer me truthfully, my man, or you may find yourself without a license."

"Sure, sor, that's what I'll do in that case," laughed Casey. "I took away two gentlemen, sor, up to No. — Thirty-first street. I always kape a rior, sor, so I'm sure of the street and number."

"Were your passengers two men only? No women?"

"Divil a woman, sor. Just two min."

"Did they arrive on the steamer?"

"Bedad, sor, I can't say. I'm thinking wan of them did."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I didn't see him anywhere about whin the first wan engaged me," explained Casey, in a rather circuitous fashion. "Me hack was a bit away from the pier, sor, and wan of them engaged me for the job, and said he was along presently. We waited about a bit, and thin he asked me would I go and get him some cigars, as he was near dead for a smoke."

"Did you go?" asked Boyd, with a subtle gleam in his attentive eyes.

"Sure I did!" exclaimed Casey, pulling out a cigar. "There's wan he gave me for the going, the which I kaping to smoke whin I rade me avening paper."

"And when you returned with the cigars, Mr. Casey? What then?"

"Whin I came back to me hack with thin, the wan who sint me said his friend was inside, and I was to start at once. So I got upon me box and started. That's all, sor."

"Not quite all, Mr. Casey," said Boyd, with a rather grim display of satisfaction. "Did you see the second man, the friend of number one?"

"I did not, indade."

"How did that happen?"

"The first wan had drawn down the curtain on the hack dure, sor."

"He had, eh?"

"He said his friend was after having wake eyes, which the light hurted; and thin he got in and closed the hack, while I was after mounting to me box."

"Ah, I see," muttered Boyd. "Did they have any baggage?"

"Divil a piece, sor."

"Not even a grip, or a portmanteau?"

"Not wan, sor, sure."

"Was the man you saw young or old?"

"Middin' like, he was, with a smooth face. Sure, sor, he looked all right, so he did."

"Smooth face, eh?" Boyd thoughtfully murmured to himself. "What happened, Casey, when you arrived at the house in Thirty-first street?"

"Sure, sor, nothing at all," vouchsafed Mr. Casey.

"Your passengers got out of the hack, didn't they?"

"Faith, they'd be like to do that," laughed Casey, with a toss of his red head. "Whin I got down from me box, the wan I saw at the pier was on the sidewalk as quick as I was meself."

"Ah! And then?"

"He said there was a trunk upstairs in the house, whin he wanted me to take away whin I wint, and I ave it at the Grand Central station."

"Well?"

"So I wint up the steps with him and into the house, and he sint me up to the third flure front, saying he'd bring in his friend while I was after getting the trunk."

"Ah, yes, I see."

"But divil a trunk could I find in the third flure front," added Casey, with ludicrous simplicity; "and whin I came down, I was told an expressman had called and got it while the boss, the wan I spoke of, was out after his friend at the steamer."

"While you were after the trunk," remarked Boyd, "your passenger with weak eyes had, I presume, been assisted into the house."

"Sure, sor, he had," cried Casey. "And niver an eye did I set on him; I was paid for me job, all right, and that's all there was to it. I'd go me pile on that, sor."

"And lose your pile, Casey, in the bargain," said Boyd, with caustic dryness. "I want you, Casey. Take me up to Pine street at once, and don't spare your horses. Here's my card."

Casey glanced curiously at the name on the slip of pasteboard, and then his honest, gray eyes came up with an utterly indescribable stare at the forceful, clean-cut features of Mr. Felix Boyd.

"Fore God, is that so?" he muttered, quite aghast with amazement. "Phat the divil, thin, was I up against this morning?"

Jimmie Coleman looked somewhat surprised on seeing Felix Boyd, when the latter entered his Pine street office in company with the hackman. Boyd's strong, clean-cut features appeared drawn and pale, his eyes feverish and dilated, and he at once turned to the lavatory and drained several full glasses of cold water, one after another.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Coleman, curiously regarding him. "Are you on fire inside?"

Boyd smiled faintly, and signed Casey to a chair.

"Not exactly, Jimmie," said he, a bit hoarsely. "Empty as a tub would hit it nearer. I've eaten nothing since early morning. Haven't had time as yet."

"Same case?"

"Yes."

"Struck anything?"

"A thread worth following, I think. At all events, I shall try it. Ring up the central office, Jimmie, and bring three men down here as quick as you—or, stay! Take this address, instead, and go up there, and—what is this house, Casey? Is it one of a block?"

"It is, sor. It's wan of a rid brick block, about the third dure from the corner."

"Here you are, Jimmie. Take two or three men along with you, and cover

that house front and rear. Have all hands lie low for a time, or until signaled from within. Let the sound of a gun bring them in on the jump. It'll not be that, unless necessary. Place them within an hour, Jimmie, when I shall show up there as—"

Boyd, who had been hurriedly removing his outer garments while rattling forth the above instructions, finished with a cant of his head in the direction of the waiting hackman, whose mouth perplexity declared itself in the ludicrous expression of his ruddy face.

Coleman knew better than to delay for questions at such a time. He had learned by experience that the intense mental application under which Boyd invariably labored, when at work on any case appealing to his peculiar talents, always rendered him irritable and impatient, and frequently so self-absorbed that food and sleep were utterly ignored for days at a stretch.

"What's the office man merely nodded, therefore, signifying that he understood; and he deferred his departure only to ask:

"Got any idea of the parties, Felix?"

Boyd replied while hurriedly removing his linen collar and tie:

"The audacious boldness of the trick, assuming I'm right, Jimmie, dead the nerve and cunning the rascals displayed, indicate that it was turned by some of the old gang—possibly by the Big Finger himself. Egad, I hope so, too. I'd give a year's pay for the satisfaction of snapping bracelets around that crafty miscreant's wrists. Come, come, Jimmie, an hour flies quickly!"

"Trust me, Felix," returned Coleman, starting for the door. "I'll have your house covered in half the time. Look for me in front, Felix."

"I'll remember," nodded Boyd, as the door closed. "Casey, my good fellow, come out of that you have on. I must borrow your clothes and your hack for an hour or two."

This unexpected proposal sent Casey, figuratively speaking, into the air.

"Borrow me clothes, is it? And me hack?" he cried shrilly. "Bedad, I guess not! I'll have none of that. Sure, sor, I'd stand for me duds, if thin was the limit. But not for me hack—niver!"

"Both clothes and hack, Casey, my good man," said Boyd firmly. "So don't argue the matter, but come up to the dough dish gracefully. Otherwise I must send to headquarters for an officer—and a pair of bangles for you."

"Bangles, is it?"

"Now come with me into the next room, like a good fellow. Sit right there in the light from the window, that I may see you plainly. Yours is rather an ordinary mug, on the whole, and I think I can duplicate it. Surely well enough to fool a knave who has seen you but once. Sit still, now, Casey, and keep your eye on me. I'll show you a thing or two worth knowing—not often I do so for strangers. Ah, here's the very wig—matches your topknot perfectly. Sit quietly now, and we'll shift rigs a little later. Warm, sin't it?"

As men of far greater mental strength often had done, Casey had wilted like a wet rag under the insinuating influence of Felix Boyd. With an expression of ludicrous helplessness, not unmingled with curious interest, he had accompanied Boyd into the latter's dressing room, containing his nondescript wardrobe and the requirements of effecting almost any kind of disguise, and there had seated himself as directed.

Casey's dubious misgivings, moreover, gave way to mingled admiration and delight as he watched the artistic transfiguration gradually perfected by Felix Boyd. At the end of half an hour the hackman, staring with wide eyes at his companion, could honestly have declared that he thought himself staring into a mirror.

"God save you, Mr. Boyd, you're a divil, so you are!" said he, when the latter was about ready to depart, clad in nearly all of Casey's garments.

"Hardly that," rejoined Boyd. "Bear in mind that you are to remain here until I return."

"That I will, sor, and not I've—say! do I look like you, sor, when I'm meself?" Casey broke off to demand bullishly, with an indescribable grin.

"Well, very nearly," said Boyd, as he slipped a brace of revolvers into his hip pockets.

"Thin, by the powers, I'll stay here till dark, so I will. If I look like that, sure I niver ought to be out in daylight. I'll wait here, sor, niver fear."

Boyd drew the cap of the hackman over his brow, then tendered the cigar which Casey had displayed before the exchange of garments.

"Enjoy a smoke while you wait, Mr. Casey," said he, with sinister dryness. "Have it, not on me, but on—the under-secretary! God willing, I'll presently have him smoking—in another fashion."

About half-past 4 that afternoon, Casey's hack appeared for the second time that day at the house in Thirty-first street, and the driver mounted the stone steps and rang the door bell.

The summons was answered by a stout female servant. Her sleeves were rolled above the elbows of a pair of brawny red arms. Her eyes took on a threatening gleam, and her head an aggressive cant, when she beheld the man on the steps, much as if she dared him to enter without being asked.

Boyd first was for feeling his way, however, despite his firm convictions. "Is the boss at home, mum?" he hastened to ask. "I mane the gentleman was after bringing up here this morning."

"No, he is not," said the woman curtly. "He does not reside here."

"Bedad, that's bad! Phat'll I do—"

"Because I'm after losing a trunk chick, a brass wan, which was given me by a fare early this morning, and I—"

"Well you don't think you lost it here, do you?" cried the woman snappishly.

"Sure, mum, it fell out o' me pocket some place," protested Boyd, with dubious pathos. "And whin I was up in your third flure front, I thought I was after hearing a jingle, like as if something had dropped, which I then, didn't think much about. But mebbe 'twas me trunk chick, mum. Would you I ave me go up again, to look about a bit on the flure? I've got to find it, mum, or the divil's to pay."

"Pay him, then, and—"

"Wait a moment, Jane," interposed a man, just then emerging from the adjoining room, from the window of which he had noted that the hack at the curb was empty. "What does the driver say—that he lost a trunk chick here?"

"Then let him come in and search for it, if he wishes."

"If you say so—"

"Come in, cabbie," cried Kelsey curtly.

ly. "What sort of a check was it?" He approached the door while speaking, and Boyd now saw that he recently had shaved off a full beard, a fact evinced by his slightly fairer complexion over the surface lately protected from the sun and weather.

Boyd wanted no more conclusive proof that the man he now beheld was the scamp who had pretended to be Dearborn's under-secretary, the crafty rascal who had lured the consul's daughter from the steamer, yet of whom Casey had not caught even a glimpse. Why the beard had been so quickly removed was also obvious, since any description of the girl's abduction would naturally include it.

With no betrayal of these impressions, however, Boyd hastened to reply, as he entered the house:

"The chick was a brass wan, sor, for a trunk at the Grand Central. With your I ave, sor, I'll look about a bit on the flure upstairs, where I wint for the trunk this morning."

Kelsey closed the front door, then quietly turned the key, and removed it. Boyd did not hear him, but with a furtive glance he discovered that the key was gone.

"Certainly, cabbie," said Kelsey, "I'll go upstairs with you. If the check is there we probably can find it."

"Thankee, sor, yit I'm not liking to trouble you to go up."

"No trouble at all, cabbie. Lead the way."

"Bedad, I can do that, having been up there once."

Followed by Kelsey, Boyd now preceded to an ordinary chamber on the third floor, where he at once began searching about the floor under the bed, with a diligence well calculated to impress the former that his pretensions were genuine. Kelsey, meantime, stood watching him from the open door, where he presently was joined by a powerful, smoothly shaven man, a furtive glance at whom convinced Boyd that he was the one by whom Casey had been engaged at the pier.

"Who is this fellow, Kelsey?" he asked, in a sonorous undertone.

"The cabbie who brought you up here, Gilroy," was the reply. "He says he lost a trunk check here, so I invited him up to search for it."

"Quite properly, too," muttered Gilroy, as he caught the expression in Kelsey's sinister eyes.

"Mebbe I'm after being mistaken," cried Boyd, now looking up and quickly touching his cap as if he recalled Gilroy. "I can't find it anywhere on the flure."

"Did you really expect to find it?" demanded Gilroy bluntly.

"I did, indade. Why else would I come here?"

"That's precisely what I want you to tell me."

"Phat's that?"

"Come, come, this trunk check yarn is much too fishy," Gilroy now cried, with an aggressive headshake. "You don't expect us to swallow such a cock and bull story as that, do you? It doesn't go down, my man."

"It doesn't, eh?" growled Boyd, with brows knitting.

"Not by a long chalk. Now out with the truth. Who sent you here?"

"Divil a soul sint me," declared Boyd. "I came on me own hook."

"But not to look for a trunk check. That won't go down."

"Lave it stay up, then. You'll get no more out o' me. I'll go about me business."

"You'll stay right where you are till you've disclosed your business," Gilroy harshly interrupted, stepping quickly into the room and closing the door.

"Turn that key, Kelsey! I'll have the truth out of this fellow, or I'll know the reason why. Now, you red-headed, rascal, out with it, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

"Aizy, aizy, with me, sor!" cried Boyd, shrinking to one corner. "Sure, I'm not looking for trouble."

"Well, you've found it all right, unless—"

"Kape your hands off! Lave me have time, I say, and I'll tell the whole business."

"Out with it, then, and quickly, or you'll have no wind with which to tell it."

Gilroy drew back a pace and lowered his threatening hand, yet it was obvious that both he and Kelsey were ready for any sort of violence, to prevent Boyd's departure and compel him to explain his intrusion. Yet neither so much as dreamed that he was other than Casey, the hackman.

This was the very situation Boyd had aimed to create, as it opened the way for one of those crafty moves—eminently characteristic of him, by which he felt sure he could locate the missing girl.

For a moment, however, he shifted nervously from one foot to the other, with eyes evading Gilroy's threatening gaze, and appeared for all the world as if he felt himself hopelessly cornered, and quite at a loss how to explain.

"Come, come, who sent you here?" Gilroy impatiently repeated.

"By God! he means Felix Boyd!" cried Kelsey, with a ghastly paleness sweeping over his face. "I told you, Gilroy, that—"

He broke off abruptly, to dart to the window and look out; while Gilroy, with an ominous frown, growled angrily:

"Dry up, you fool, and leave this fellow to me! Hark you, cabbie! Are you sure the man's name is Boyd?"

"There's divil a doubt of that, sor. I've had him for a fare times enough. That's how I know where his office is."

"In Pine street?"

"It is, sor."

"What questions did he ask you?"

"He asked me was I at the Jane street pier this morning, so he did, and what fares I brought away with me."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him I had two gints for Thirty-first street. Thin he asked me was I sure they had no girl with them."

"And you?" cried Gilroy, with suppressed vehemence. "What did you say to that?"